



47<sup>th</sup> session of the Human Rights Council

**Agenda Item 2: Interactive Dialogue on the Annual Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights**

22 June 2021

**Right of Reply by Sri Lanka**

Mr. Vice President,

We exercise this right of reply in response to references to Sri Lanka made by the United Kingdom and other speakers during this interactive dialogue.

The proscribed groups referred to in these interventions include organisations linked to the LTTE and other international terrorist groups such as ISIS and Al Qaeda and their regional and Sri Lankan affiliates. They have been listed under the relevant domestic regulations as a part of Sri Lanka's obligations under UN Security Council Resolution 1373 which has been in operation for almost a decade. The list is based on cogent evidence. It is misleading and unwarranted to characterise action to prevent financing of terrorism and violent extremism as targeting of any particular community or as a hindrance to reconciliation.

Sri Lanka experienced the Easter Sunday suicide bombings in April 2019, which is by far the biggest terrorist attack on a civilian target to take place anywhere in the world. Measures taken by Sri Lanka to prevent recurrence of such terrorist attacks have been taken in the interest of public security and in accordance with the recommendations of the Parliamentary Sectoral Oversight Committee on National Security of 2019/2020. This was a unique national effort which had the participation of Parliamentarians of both the then government and the opposition, representing all ethnic and religious communities in the country. Sri Lanka continues to cooperate with foreign intelligence services including those of the OIC countries, to combat cross border terrorism. Some of the perpetrators of this act of terrorism have already been charged outside Sri Lanka.

What the Human Rights High Commissioner has referred to as provisions in the law that 'permit the arbitrary administrative detention of people', are essentially the same legal provisions that were applied to rehabilitate and release into society nearly 12,000 Tamil Tiger cadres instead of prosecuting them for terrorist offences after the war ended in 2009.

These rehabilitated former LTTE cadres have re-integrated into society. This has been one of the most successful terrorist rehabilitation programmes in the world - a fact acknowledged even by the then UN High Commissioner for Human Rights in 2013. It is regrettable that Sri Lanka's successful efforts are being subject to unjustifiable criticism.

It is regretted that certain speakers seek to highlight perceived notions of targeting particular communities including in the context of commemoration events.

The Global Threat Forecast 2021 of the UN Threat and Risk Assessment Service (TRS) states that the *“LTTE ideology and doctrine are still upheld as romantic and attractive among the younger generation”*. The UN Security Council Resolution of 1624 condemns *“in the strongest terms the incitement of terrorist acts and repudiate attempts at the justification or glorification (apologie) of terrorist acts that may incite further terrorist acts”* and calls upon all States to adopt such measures as may be necessary and appropriate to prohibit such incitement.

In this background, what the Government sought to prevent through judicial action was glorification of terrorism through public gatherings and events with the use of symbols of a proscribed terrorist organization. The local Courts in the relevant areas have prevented these events, taking into consideration among other things, the nature of these events, possible threats to public security and the health regulations amidst an ongoing pandemic.

Against this backdrop, we deplore attempts by certain countries to misrepresent legitimate action taken by Sri Lanka to protect its people as ‘targeting’ or discriminating against a particular community.

Thank you.